



# Nebraska Literacy Project

January 10, 2025

# Vision

To foster a culture of proficient and lifelong readers in Nebraska and unlock student potential for learning, earning, and living through a focus on evidence-based reading instruction.

# Goal

Increase third grade proficiency on NSCAS ELA to 75% by 2030.

## Sub Goals

- Increase the % of Nebraska K-3 students who meet the Nebraska Reading Improvement Act approved assessment thresholds
- Ensure 100% of Nebraska educator preparation programs are implementing evidence-based instruction for teachers grounded in the science of reading.



# Statutory and Policy Context

# Reading Improvement Act

- Neb. Rev. Stat. 79-2601 thru 79-2607 (2018)
- An *assessment of student reading* is administered three times during the school year to all students in grades kindergarten through grade three
- Any student who is identified as having a reading deficiency shall receive an *individual reading improvement plan* no later than thirty days after the identification of such reading deficiency.



# Professional Learning System

(Nebraska Revised State Statute 79-2607)

The State Department of Education shall develop and implement a *professional learning system* to help provide sustained professional learning and training regarding evidence-based reading instruction for teachers who teach children from four years of age through third grade at an approved or accredited school and teachers employed by an early childhood education program approved by the State Board of Education. The professional learning system shall include information and tips for teachers related to helping children and families work with *local family literacy centers to strengthen home and family literacy programs* and better instruct children in reading.

# Regional Literacy Coaches

(Nebraska Revised State Statute 79-2607)

The State Department of Education *shall work with educational service units* to provide *regional coaches* to approved or accredited elementary schools to provide assistance and job-embedded training relating to evidence-based reading instruction to teachers who teach students in kindergarten through third grade.

# State Board Position Statement

- Promote the practice of *adults reading* aloud to students daily to foster their enjoyment of reading and expose them to rich spoken language.
- Ensure all classrooms are “print-rich” environments, and that students have opportunities to engage with a wide range of high-quality literary and informational texts.
- Select and implement standards-aligned, *high-quality instructional materials for English Language Arts*.
- Develop and implement a curriculum scope and sequence of foundational writing instruction.

PS3

## Foundational Literacy

The Nebraska State Board of Education supports and encourages systemic efforts to improve foundational literacy, working to ensure that all students become successful readers and writers. The Nebraska State Board of Education believes that all schools should establish policies that promote high-quality early literacy instruction that is grounded in evidence-based practices and that highlights the importance of grade-level reading. Foundational literacy instruction is essential to ensure all children become successful readers and writers. All students, including students with disabilities, English learners, and high-ability learners should have access to high-quality instructional materials and instruction.

### All schools should:

- Understand that literacy development begins at birth and partner with families and communities to encourage strong early literacy connections.
- Promote the practice of adults reading aloud to students daily to foster their enjoyment of reading and expose them to rich spoken language.
- Provide tools and resources to students' caregivers and families that support early literacy development.
- Ensure all classrooms are “print-rich” environments, and that students have opportunities to engage with a wide range of high-quality literary and informational texts.
- Select and implement standards-aligned, high-quality instructional materials for English Language Arts.
- Develop and implement a curriculum scope and sequence of foundational writing instruction.
- Guarantee systematic and ongoing professional learning for all educators in language development, phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension within standards-based, core instruction.
- Ensure all students receive a strong sequence of explicit and systematic instruction in phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.
- Use the Nebraska Multi-tiered System of Support (NeMTSS) to identify students in need of intervention that consists of targeted, supplemental instruction and progress monitoring.

# Tenets of Professional Learning System





# NDE Nebraska Literacy Project Overview (1 vision, 3 goals, 5 tenets)

## Vision

To foster a culture of proficient and lifelong readers in Nebraska and unlock student potential for learning, earning, and living through a focus on evidence-based reading instruction

## Goals

**Increase third-grade proficiency on NSCAS ELA to 75% by 2030**

### Sub Goals

- Increase the % of Nebraska K-3 students who meet the Nebraska Reading Improvement Act approved assessment thresholds
- Ensure 100% of Nebraska educator preparation programs are implementing evidence-based instruction for teachers grounded in the science of reading

### Tenet 1 Professional Learning System

High quality professional development for all educators who teach literacy for students age 4 through 3rd grade grounded in the science of reading to ensure that educators have skills in evidence-based instructional practices

### Tenet 2 Curriculum and Teacher Preparation Aligned to Evidence-based Reading Instruction

Sustained teacher preparation programs and PreK-3 curriculum, instruction, and assessment grounded in the science of reading using high quality materials

### Tenet 3 Regional Literacy Coaches

Establishment of a network of literacy coaches across the state who are trained in the science of reading and evidence-based instructional practices. This network of coaches will provide sustained support services to Nebraska schools

### Tenet 4 Data Collections to Evaluate Effectiveness

Data collections measuring the effectiveness of literacy initiatives and implementation of professional development in evidence-based reading

### Tenet 5 Family Literacy and Pre-K Programs

Development of resources to assist families in accessing local family literacy centers, existing community literacy initiatives, and pre-kindergarten programs in order to strengthen literacy and language development for young children so that they start kindergarten ready to thrive



# Integrating Literacy: Unifying the Science and Evidence of Reading Instruction



## The Science of Reading

"Foundational Literacy"

[Nebraska State Board of Education- Foundational Literacy Position Statement<sup>1</sup>](#)

vast, interdisciplinary body of scientifically-based research about reading and issues related to reading and writing<sup>2</sup>

### Components:

#### Fluency:

Ability to read with accuracy, appropriate expression, and a well-paced rate.

#### Phonics:

Understanding the relationship between letters and sounds

#### Phonological Awareness:

Awareness of sounds of words  
in learning to read and spell

#### Comprehension:

Ability to understand, interpret, and make meaningful connections to written or spoken language.

#### Vocabulary:

Knowing what words mean and how to say and use them correctly

#### Oracy:

Ability to speak and understand spoken language effectively

## Structured Literacy

comprehensive approach to literacy instruction grounded in the science of reading

explicit, systematic, and sequential instruction

Structured literacy incorporates evidence-based literacy practices, which are supported by the science of reading.

## Evidence Based Reading Instruction

program or instructional practices that are backed by reliable, trustworthy, and valid evidence

systematic, sequential, research-based system of explicit literacy instruction

Evidence-based literacy is a broader concept that encompasses any research-backed method.

<sup>1</sup>Nebraska Department of Education. (2024). Foundational literacy. <https://www.education.ne.gov/policyreference/foundational-literacy/>

<sup>2</sup>The Reading League. (n.d.). What is the science of reading? The Reading League. <https://www.thereadingleague.org/what-is-the-science-of-reading/>

# Tenet 1: Professional Learning System

- Current SOR Professional Learning Options
  - NDE support for Professional Development Programs
    - UNO Early Literacy Workshop
    - WORDS (UNL)
    - Project RISE (UNK)
  - NDE Literacy Advisory Panel comprised of individuals with strong knowledge of SOR who will
    - Assist in the development of criteria for SOR-approved professional development that districts might select moving forward
    - Support the selection of resources and professional development opportunities for regional literacy coaches

# Tenet 2: Curriculum and Teacher Preparation aligned with Evidence-Based Reading Instruction

- High-quality instructional materials align to academic standards, have clear learning outcomes, and reflect evidence-based practices.
  - Nebraska PK-12 districts have autonomy in the selection of instructional materials.
  - The NDE provides guidance with information about the extent of alignment between instructional materials and academic standards.
- Provide guidance for NDE Rule 20 updates to educator preparation programs.

# Tenet 3: Regional Literacy Coaches

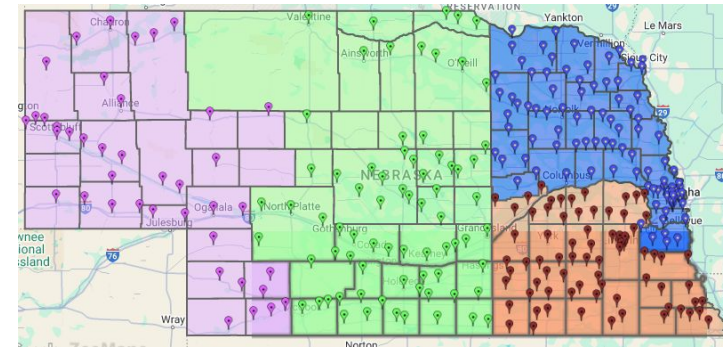
- Develop job descriptions and hiring timelines
- Collaborate with Nebraska ESUCC to develop a plan for hiring and coordinating the use of Regional Literacy Coaches
- Collaborate with Regional Literacy Coaches and the NDE Literacy Advisory Committee to develop sustainable processes to support and provide professional learning for coaches

# Tenet 4: Collections of Data to Measure Progress

- Monitor trends in 3rd grade NSCAS proficiency
- Analyze trends in reported percentages of Nebraska K-3 students who meet the Nebraska Reading Improvement Act approved assessment thresholds
- Evaluate Professional Learning Programs to monitor assessment data and other indicators of effectiveness (with assistance from UNL and UNO)

# Tenet 5: Family Literacy Centers and Early Childhood Programs

- Develop a web page that will help Nebraska families to find literacy resources in their area
- Provide resources to support pre-kindergarten programs in development of foundational literacy skills
- Continue to evaluate the Nebraska Growing Readers Initiative and explore additional funding opportunities



Nebraska Libraries



Thank you!